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FOR INFORMATION

SUMMARY OF MID-TERM REVIEWS AND MAJOR EVALUATIONS OF COUNTRY PROGRAMMES

Americas and the Caribbean

SUMMARY

The present report was prepared in response to Executive Board decision 1995/8 (E/ICEF/1995/9/Rev.1) which requested the secretariat to submit to the Board a summary of the outcome of mid-term reviews and major country programme evaluations, specifying, inter alia, the results achieved, lessons learned and the need for any adjustment in the country programme. The Board is to comment on the reports and provide guidance to the secretariat, if necessary. The mid-term reviews and major country programme evaluations described in the present report were conducted during 1995 and 1996.

INTRODUCTION

1. Four mid-term reviews (MTRs) were held in the Americas and Caribbean region in 1996, for countries with widely differing situations: the multi-island programme for the Eastern Caribbean; and Colombia, Ecuador and Haiti. In addition, three major evaluations were undertaken: of the Central America water and sanitation programme, which covers seven countries; of programmes for children in especially difficult circumstances (CEDC) in Brazil, Guatemala and Peru; and of the Haiti country programme. An evaluation of efforts to control iodine deficiency disorders (IDD) in Bolivia is also discussed.

* E/ICEF/1997/8.

2. The context for the reviews and evaluations was set by the Third Ministerial Conference on Social Policy and Children in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Santiago de Chile in August 1996. Progress towards the goals of the World Summit for Children was reviewed and new challenges for the region were set. The Convention on the Rights of the Child provides a framework for programming and reviewing UNICEF activities in the region. The framework has been applied systematically to strategy development, as recorded in country notes, and was used for MTRs for the first time in 1996.

3. All the reviews were conducted with broad participation of the relevant Governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), other partners and United Nations and donor representatives. A second, internal exercise was to review the implications for country programme management plans in UNICEF offices, with adjustments made to the organization and staffing of offices as appropriate.

MID-TERM REVIEWS

Colombia

4. The MTR in Colombia confirmed the role of UNICEF as a catalyst for change which is capable of bringing together the various groups that work for children. The participants recognized that the main contribution of UNICEF was not financial but rather its capacity to support institutions in developing strategies, methodologies and innovative experiences as well as in focusing on the operative aspects of promoting children's rights.

5. The integrated basic services programme was singled out as having the potential to become a social development model. The MTR recommended strengthening local capacity for management of social policy at municipal level.

6. Rights, peace, gender and environment were repeatedly referred to as cross-cutting elements of cooperation that required a new integrated and non-sectoral approach to programming.

7. In conclusion, the MTR requested UNICEF to expand its efforts for peace by further encouraging and promoting the direct participation of children in events and programmes designed to make their fears and hopes known. UNICEF was asked to continue and expand its catalytic role in the broad alliance of government, NGOs and civil society partners; to ensure that municipal plans in favour of children are developed; to expand its training and capacity-building with counterparts; and to develop approaches for developing community capacity for planning and problem-solving to improve the situation of children and women.

8. A further recommendation of the MTR was to extend the existing country programme for another year to compensate for implementation constraints encountered in the first years of the country programme.

Eastern Caribbean multi-island programme

9. The MTR of the Eastern Caribbean multi-island programme showed that the success in meeting the basic needs of the majority of children and women was the result of decades of sustained investment in social development. However, some countries which used to enjoy high living standards based on foreign exchange earnings have seen increases in the numbers of people living in poverty. The examples of Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago show how quickly the situation of children and women can deteriorate following a few years of economic and political instability.

10. The consolidation of social gains was not considered complete. Emerging problems such as drug abuse among adolescents, teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, crime and violence were seen as linked to poor educational performance and undetected functional illiteracy, particularly, but not exclusively, among boys.

11. The review highlighted growing disparities between richer and poorer sections of society. UNICEF was requested to help Governments and NGOs to better target their interventions. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was found to be a useful tool for elevating social development to the same level of importance as economic development and for providing a framework to evaluate community-based arrangements for child development. Participants in the review also requested an evaluation of the impact of programmes in the areas of parenting and early childhood education.

12. In conclusion, it was confirmed that the strategies of the ongoing multi-island programme were well suited to achieving its objectives. Nevertheless, emerging problems require attention, underserved populations have to be better targeted and the partnership with NGOs, which is currently very productive, needs to be expanded. Investments in social development have to be maintained, based on the 20/20 principle endorsed by the World Summit for Social Development.

Ecuador

13. The Ecuador MTR took place three months after a new Government was installed. One of the major preoccupations of the meeting was that basic indicators in health were not improving and were worsening in nutrition. Immunization rates had stagnated at approximately 75 per cent. There had been significant progress in the poor Andean communities covered by the Programa de la Región Andina (PROANDES) (Programme for the Andean Region), linked to the expansion of bilingual education, which had given many more rural children access to learning. UNICEF was also a major partner in a large education project funded by the World Bank that provided new schools to underserved communities.

14. Much of the current programme had focused on capacity-building at different levels of society and with a range of government and non-government counterparts. There was praise for the programme's social mobilization efforts, especially the recent yo cuento contigo ("I am counting on you") programme, which gave expression to children's views, concerns and hopes during the run-up to the

1996 general election and which convinced all the major presidential candidates, including the new President, to declare their commitment to policies that protect children's rights, promote new legislation in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and invest more in the social sectors.

15. Participants were concerned, however, by the dispersion of efforts and resources among 10 programmes and 211 activities, especially as supplementary funding was not received at the rate originally anticipated. The programmes most affected by the funding shortfall were for nutrition, young child development, CEDC and water and sanitation projects.

16. In conclusion, UNICEF was asked to support the Government in its efforts to improve health and nutrition, as well as to provide the technical expertise and funding necessary to improve rapidly the situation of children and to help the Government reach and maintain the goals adopted in the national plan of action and the 1994 Nariño Accord. UNICEF was asked to build on its successes and further develop the area of children's rights; to consolidate programme areas, for example by expanding the successful education programme into the PROANDES and Amazon programme areas; and to reduce the number of activities to create a focused, efficient and effective programme.

Haiti

17. In Haiti, the MTR provided an excellent opportunity for a formal exchange of ideas with the new Government, which had been installed less than three months previously. The current programme was reviewed, and it was agreed that UNICEF support had been crucial at very difficult times over the previous three years. There was much debate over the role of NGOs. Government participants questioned the high proportion of assistance still being channelled through NGOs, but it was recognized that until government departments improved the capacity and quality of service delivery, NGOs would continue to play a key role in ensuring access to services for most children and women. It was proposed that a partnership between the Government and NGOs be formed. In the meantime, UNICEF should work with all partners.

18. Much of the work over the past three years had been a response to the emergency, with particular emphasis on health, nutrition, water and sanitation. As the country programme becomes more regular, the MTR requested that UNICEF now give greater priority to education, expand water and sanitation interventions and strengthen the women-centred integrated projects, especially in the poorer areas of north-west Haiti.

19. It was decided to postpone the preparation of a new programme and extend the current programme so as to harmonize the country programming cycle with those of other United Nations agencies and to develop further the partnership with the new Government. This will allow UNICEF to make the transition to a regular programme while achieving the objectives of the current three-year programme approved by the Executive Board in 1995. A two-year bridging programme will be presented to the Executive Board at its third regular session in September 1997.

EVALUATIONS

Central American water and sanitation programme

20. The evaluation of the UNICEF water and sanitation programme in Central America, undertaken by the Swedish International Development Agency, was undertaken in 1995 and the report was issued in 1996. This was the first external evaluation of the programme.

21. The evaluators found that the UNICEF model of "catalytic inputs" brought immediate results. This model is based on the promotion and dissemination of appropriate, low-cost technology and the mobilization of locally available resources. However, the programme had remained predominantly biased towards water provision with too little emphasis on hygiene and health.

22. Technologies need to be standardized to permit production within the subregion and reduce the problem of spare parts and delivery delays. At the same time, a new cadre of people should be involved to create alliances with others for the sustainability of programme successes.

23. The current approach to cost-recovery demands no contribution towards investment from rural communities and partial contribution in peri-urban areas. The evaluators recommend that willingness to pay be used as an indicator of demand and that it be applied to the programme.

24. The evaluators recommend continued support to the programme, which should include all seven countries and a subregional component. They recommend an improved balance between water and sanitation and more focus on capacity-building and empowerment through participatory planning and implementation. They call for the establishment of a strict management and monitoring system that reflects how the different parts of the programme are linked.

25. The findings and recommendations of the evaluation have been shared with concerned government counterparts and were taken into consideration in preparing the new Central American subregional water and sanitation programme approved by the Executive Board in September 1996 (E/ICEF/1996/P/L.70).

Programmes for children in especially difficult circumstances in Brazil, Guatemala and Peru

26. The evaluation of the CEDC programmes in Brazil, Guatemala and Peru was undertaken by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), which provided most of the $17 million received for the programmes. In Guatemala and Peru, UNICEF was a major partner with the Government, and in Brazil, local governments and NGOs played a central role in programme execution.

27. Three different programme methodologies were evaluated. Community-oriented programmes encourage parents to institute preventive measures with educational, recreational and cultural activities. Street-based programmes provide psychological as well as medical and educational services, through

street educators and social workers, to help reintegrate children into families and schools. Lastly, open institutions attract street children and provide an adequate environment for the child's personal and social development.

28. The evaluators found that programme methodologies were not sufficiently differentiated by gender to be able to highlight girls' problems. It was difficult to reach child drug addicts and others with social problems on a consistent basis.

29. They stressed that any form of support to the labour of working children under 14 years of age should be eliminated in favour of economic incentives which would free them from work and send them to school.

30. They recommended that all CEDC activities should be compatible with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and that IDB should ensure that its interventions in this area are consistent with the UNICEF programmes in a given country. CEDC programmes should be integrated with health, education and urban programmes in marginal areas.

31. The evaluators concluded that the IDB-sponsored programmes did not address the underlying causes that lead to the current and future existence of street children and working children.

32. They stressed that the partnership with UNICEF was highly positive and that UNICEF possessed the necessary technical expertise. They proposed that the best partnership would have UNICEF serve in the capacity of technical adviser, while the resources would be allocated to executing entities.

Haiti country programme

33. The evaluation of the Haiti country programme covered the period from 1992 to mid-1996. The team consisted of two external evaluators and one staff member from the UNICEF Division of Evaluation, Policy and Planning. The evaluation focused on strategic programme choices, management response and programme outcome, and also identified sustainable elements of programming during emergency and transition phases.

34. The team found that UNICEF, with a range of partners, did manage successfully to provide essential basic services to the population during the crisis period. This included far-reaching immunization and vitamin A distribution, as well as the provision of crucial water supplies, primarily in urban areas. Since the crisis, a national breast-feeding promotion campaign has made progress. UNICEF activities also have included strategic advocacy for child rights as well as relatively small-scale, but increasingly strategic, activities in education and with street children.

35. During the crisis, including the period when the sanctions imposed by the United Nations were in effect, UNICEF cooperation played a leading role in monitoring the situation of children so that their survival, development and protection rights would be respected. These actions demonstrated that the cooperation programme was able to collect, analyse and use information on the

situation of children in a highly sensitive country situation in a manner which helped to establish effective partnerships with NGOs and other partners for the delivery of humanitarian assistance despite the various constraints inherent in the country situation.

36. The evaluators also underlined the importance of balanced partnership strategies, involving both traditional government partners and civil society organizations, as part of emergency preparation in situations of potential crisis. Limited civil society partnerships in the first year of the crisis left UNICEF isolated, and severely hampered in terms of implementation. UNICEF subsequently developed excellent relationships with the non-governmental sector and other elements of civil society. UNICEF also initiated an approach for strengthening community-based organizations for local-level preparedness and medium-term development.

37. The Haiti experience underlines the tremendous challenge posed by partnerships for UNICEF as a capacity-building organization. UNICEF partnerships must be based on a careful match between UNICEF objectives, resources and capacities and the capacities of partners. These new initiatives require careful, ideally participatory, monitoring of progress.

38. UNICEF was able to develop a flexible and strategic plan for different scenarios, allowing options for response to crisis as well as transition to democracy. Nevertheless, the evaluators underlined the tendency of UNICEF to fall back into planning for the status quo in spite of a tense local context. It was indicated that more support could have been given from headquarters and the regional office in terms of placing or seconding experienced staff to support the country office at critical periods.

Control of iodine deficiency disorders in Bolivia

39. In September, a group of experts from UNICEF, the Pan American Health Organization, the International Council for the Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders and the Programme against Micronutrient Malnutrition evaluated Bolivia's progress in controlling IDD. The evaluation concluded that Bolivia has eliminated IDD nationwide as a public health problem and recommended that support continue for monitoring the quality and consistency of salt iodization.

CONCLUSIONS

40. Several conclusions can be drawn from the four reviews and four evaluations. Partnership is an essential element of success within a broad alliance of Governments, NGOs, United Nations agencies and donors working for children. More frequent review and analysis of country situations would ensure more rapid intervention when problems are identified. The Convention on the Rights of the Child applies to all situations, but the tools to use it as a monitoring and programme framework are still not adequately developed. These and other conclusions have been presented for analysis and comment to the standing committees of the Latin America and Caribbean Regional Management Team (RMT). The results and implications will be reviewed by the full RMT in April 1997.

41. Despite the wide range of situations and experiences reviewed in the present document, it is clear that UNICEF remains a critical partner, responding to community and country demands and needs. It confirms the importance of the country approach to programming while highlighting the need for more systematic exchange of experiences between countries and regions.

42. It has been decided regionally that in-depth management reviews will be undertaken in conjunction with each MTR and at the time of reviewing proposed plans of operation before submitting country programme recommendations to the Executive Board.

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SUMMARY

The present report was prepared in response to Executive Board decision 1995/8 (E/ICEF/1995/9/Rev.1) which requested the secretariat to submit to the Board a summary of the outcome of mid-term reviews and major country programme evaluations, specifying, inter alia, the results achieved, lessons learned and the need for any adjustment in the country programme. The Board is to comment on the reports and provide guidance to the secretariat, if necessary. The mid-term reviews and major country programme evaluations described in the present report were conducted during 1995-1996.

INTRODUCTION

1. While recognizing the strengths of the programme preparation process, UNICEF has renewed its commitment to improving programme reviews, monitoring and evaluation in order to assess the quality of programme implementation and its impact on children and women. Therefore, attempts have been made in 1996 to assess programme accomplishments, analyse lessons learned and make programme adjustments during the second half of the cycle. The present report (a) shares the experience gained in the East Asia and the Pacific region in 1996 based on mid-term reviews of country programmes covering the period 1994-1998 in the Philippines, Thailand and the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea; and (b) makes some observations on programme evaluations conducted in the region in 1995-1996.

* E/ICEF/1997/8.

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2. As part of the Management Excellence Programme (MEP), with its focus on decentralization, the East Asia and the Pacific region has adopted an experimental approach for exploring regional support mechanisms in the country programming process, while maintaining the centrality of UNICEF country programmes of cooperation at country level. Following the establishment of a regional management team (RMT) in early 1996, the RMT has taken some steps to share experiences, expertise and best practices in the region. Selected colleagues in the region have joined the country office teams in programme strategy and mid-term review meetings to exchange views and experiences. Regional project committees, comprised of representatives from regional and country offices, have been set up to analyse issues of common interest such as the Convention of the Rights of the Child as a framework for country programmes; decentralization, local capacity-building and community empowerment; women's health; the reduction of malnutrition; and basic education. In addition, the RMT has had substantive discussions on lessons learned from experiences in the region. Based on the 1996 experience, the present report aims to reflect on the added value of this approach to the mid-term reviews of country programmes and follow-up actions that can be considered at country and regional levels to help improve the quality of country programmes.

MID-TERM REVIEWS

3. Mid-term review meetings in the Philippines, Thailand and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea were held between July and September 1996. They were attended by senior government officers, local executives, non-governmental organization (NGO) representatives and senior embassy representatives of donor and/or Board member countries in different combinations. Plans for the reviews were coordinated jointly with UNICEF by the coordinating bodies established as part of the programmes of cooperation in each of the three countries. In the Philippines, reviews were organized at provincial and city levels before the national review meeting in Manila. Some external evaluations were conducted, for example, on salt iodization, multigrade instruction, child labour and capacity-building for local government projects in the Philippines, and on life skills training and communication in Thailand.

4. The programme for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was approved by the Executive Board in 1993 in the amount of $1,000,000 annually from general resources for the five-year period 1994-1998, with no provision for supplementary funding. Due to the emergency situation in 1995-1996, UNICEF joined the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs in making two appeals for emergency funds and has been able to provide over $5 million in food, vaccines, vitamins and other supplies to children and women affected by the recent devastating floods. The Thailand and Philippine programmes have raised 27 and 57 per cent, respectively, of supplementary funds during the first half of the cycle. Recognizing the potential for fund-raising in those two middle-income countries, private sector fund-raising efforts have been launched through direct mail campaigns, and contributions of $700,000 and $359,000 have been made by local donors to UNICEF in Thailand and the Philippines, respectively. As supplementary funds become available in some programme sectors while other projects remain unfunded, country office teams continue to adjust programme plans, as well as geographic and population coverage, while reviewing their implications for staffing for programme support.

5. The three countries have achieved most of the mid-decade goals. Immunization coverage, for example, ranges from 85 to 97 per cent and has been sustained. The Government of Thailand covers all costs of vaccines and other supplies; and vaccine supply is ensured through the Vaccine Independence Initiative in the Philippines where no cases of polio have been detected in recent years. While vaccines were produced in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for several years, cold-chain equipment is being provided during the emergency period to all major cities and to about 25 per cent of the counties affected by the floods.

6. Taking universal salt iodization as an example of a mid-decade goal, iodine deficiency has been identified as a public health problem in all three countries, with goitre prevalence rates among school-age children at over 10 per cent. In response, Thailand, with royal endorsement, has achieved 50 per cent iodization of edible salt. In the Philippines, iodization plants have the potential for producing 74 per cent of the required salt, and 67 per cent of the population are aware of the importance of using iodized salt. Following a survey of iodine deficiency disorders (IDD) in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, a task force was established; equipment for salt iodization has been provided and the production of iodized salt is expected to begin in early 1997.

7. Child survival efforts in Thailand are being sustained as part of regular primary health care. Funds for the programmes are provided by the Government, and surveillance and monitoring systems are in place. UNICEF assistance to health and nutrition programmes has been reduced from $2.4 million in 1994 to $542,000 in 1996. The need for advocacy for intersectoral coordination and private sector involvement is recognized for dealing with iron deficiency anaemia and the elimination of vitamin A deficiency and IDD.

8. The Philippines programme has demonstrated strong cooperation with the Government and extensive partnerships with a number of agencies, including NGOs and bilateral and multilateral donors, helping the Government to achieve the mid-decade goals. The Philippines Plan of Action for Children was prepared in 1992 following the signing of the World Summit for Children Declaration. The mid-decade goals were reviewed by the President and the Leagues of Provinces, Cities and Municipalities and adopted as part of the new country programme. Achievement of the mid-decade goals in the Philippines can be attributed to collaboration with, and support from, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Population Fund, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (AsDB), the Australian Agency for International Development, the United States Agency for International Development, the Japan International Cooperation Agency, the Canadian International Development Agency, the European Union, the Kreditanstalt fur Wiederafbau (the German development bank), Rotary International and several NGOs. UNICEF contributions were in the form of advocacy and mobilization of partners from policy makers at national level to community groups at grass-root level; training of community workers; development of training manuals and information, education and communication materials; the provision of supplies and technical guidelines; and, above all, regular contacts of UNICEF staff with partners at all levels for programme support for capacity-building, planning, training, implementation, monitoring and mobilizing purposes.

9. In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, UNICEF responded to two successive flood emergencies beginning in late 1995 by providing rations of corn-soya blend (CSB), fortified with vitamin A and minerals, to nearly 100,000

children in the affected areas. Since July 1996, 100,000 children have received CSB, dried skim milk, instant noodles and high-protein biscuits. UNICEF has provided measles and polio vaccines for 700,000 children. Because the oral rehydration salts (ORS) factory was destroyed during the 1995 floods, UNICEF has provided nearly 1.2 million one-litre sachets of ORS, and a plan for a new ORS production plant has been prepared with technical assistance from UNICEF. As regular programmes combined with emergency responses are implemented, the National Coordinating Committee (NCC) for the programme of cooperation has worked effectively, and its capacities have been strengthened steadily through regular contacts and study visits. Since early 1996, a UNICEF officer has been based in Pyongyang, providing opportunities for closer contacts with NCC members and for undertaking field visits to project sites.

10. Rates of enrolment of boys and girls in primary schools have reached above 90 per cent levels in all three countries, although retention rates vary. Recognizing the need to improve retention rates, the quality and relevance of education, and learning achievements, UNICEF provides support to primary education and early childhood education (ECE) programmes in all three countries.

11. In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, special attention is being given to technical assistance and materials for preschools and primary schools. Paper for printing textbooks and equipment such as video cassette recorders and television sets have been provided for selected remote, rural branch schools. The basic education programme assisted by UNICEF in Thailand has promoted a participatory approach to teaching/learning. Community concerns about HIV/AIDS and the environment have been introduced into the curriculum through life skills education for students from ethnic minorities. An early childhood development (ECD) initiative in 16 provinces has involved communities in promoting a holistic approach to child development, including the monitoring of child growth and development by the family and community. The approach has been adopted by the Government for nationwide application. Limited school facilities, limited numbers of trained teachers and high drop-out rates in the early years of primary school have been identified as key issues in the Philippines. UNICEF support has focused on strengthening multigrade instruction and early childhood care and development (ECCD) through the training of 10,900 teachers and administrators; the development of instructional materials for teachers and pupils; and the establishment of 12 multigrade demonstration schools, equipped with water and sanitation facilities, to serve as centres for best practices, community support, health, sanitation and nutrition promotion.

12. The ECCD project, which began in the Philippines as an experiment in the early 1980s, was expanded considerably with further refinements in the home- and centre-based approaches to ECCD. Presently, the World Bank and AsDB are assisting the Government to formulate a major ECCD investment package aimed at integrating health, nutrition and ECE services to 0- to 6-year-old children through cost-sharing arrangements between national and local governments. UNICEF advocacy for, and partnership in, the programme from its inception have paved the way for a nationwide programme that has the potential of being universal and sustainable.

13. With the achievement of most of the mid-decade goals, Thailand, the Philippines and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, along with other countries in the region, are poised to work towards achieving the more difficult and complex goals of reducing maternal mortality rates and malnutrition, and providing universal access to water and sanitation and basic education for all by the year 2000.

14. With high rates of economic growth and rapid social change, problems of child protection have emerged in Thailand and the Philippines. About 1.1 million children are estimated to be working under harsh conditions, mostly in the non-formal sector including commercial sex trade. Estimates of the number of child prostitutes vary from 13,000 to many times that number. The situation is further compounded by the increasing numbers of people infected with HIV, estimated at 800,000 in 1994. HIV incidence among pregnant women is estimated at 2.2 per cent; and by the year 2000, approximately 100,000 children will be born to HIV-positive mothers and 75,500 children under five years old will die of HIV/AIDS.

15. With peace negotiations and a reduction of insurgency in the Philippines, the number of children affected by armed conflicts was reduced from 31,000 in 1990 to 22,000 in 1993. The number of working children is estimated at 2.85 million, including 86,000 street children. Increased violence against children and sexual exploitation, particularly among girls, within the households have been noted in the Philippines.

16. In responding to HIV/AIDS at the community level in Thailand, UNICEF works with a range of smaller NGOs and community-based organizations. They are located close to the concerned populations; have their confidence; can adapt their working methods to meet local needs; have promoted peer networks of people with HIV/AIDS; and have encouraged community responses to care for people living with HIV/AIDS while supporting preventive measures. The project has received supplementary funds from the Government and the Netherlands Committee for UNICEF as part of a six-country programme in the Mekong Region, as well as funds from UNICEF National Committees in Australia and Japan. While many agencies are involved in the HIV/AIDS programmes in Thailand, coordination has remained weak. To protect young girls from being lured into big cities, the daughters' education project in the north has enabled young girls to continue their education with scholarships. This is being combined with the youth career development programme organized by UNICEF and six leading hotels in Bangkok to train young women from the north in the hotel industry.

17. Legislative reforms and capacity-building efforts have been made in the Philippines child labour project to enforce minimum age standards and to establish new partnerships with labour unions and employers' groups. Services to about 23,000 child workers and their families have been provided, including livelihood opportunities for parents, rehabilitation services for counselling, health, temporary shelter and skill training. Collaboration with the International Labour Organisation/International Programme for Elimination of Child Labour is being strengthened to deal with the complex issues of child labour. The need for a mix of preventive, protective and rehabilitative activities for addressing the issues of child victims of commercial sexual exploitation has been recognized following the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Stockholm in August 1996, as part of the programme adjustment in 1997-1998.

18. Programmes of convergence of basic services for children are being implemented in 57 provinces, 23 cities and 9 urban municipalities in the Philippines. The programme areas are classified into three categories in terms of their needs and programme approaches: (a) high-impact areas with large populations for sector-specific interventions in health, education or nutrition; (b) convergent areas known for acute problems of children, with a focus on convergence of key basic services; and (c) areas with special needs known for

children at high risk and in need of special protective measures. Local Government Units (LGUs) have supported and managed programmes for children; encouraged inter-agency collaboration; worked with non-traditional partners; received support from provincial legislative bodies; and allocated local government resources to children's programmes while strengthening their capacities. LGU capacities and participation levels vary from one province or municipality to another. Recognizing the heavy demand and complexities involved in working with 232 partner agencies at national and subnational levels, the Government of the Philippines-UNICEF Steering Committee is looking for options to involve the Leagues of Provinces, Municipalities and Cities in programme management and coordination functions.

19. Building upon the groundwork of the previous two country programmes, the urban basic services programme is now strongly rooted in the UNICEF-Government of the Philippines cooperation. The Presidential Commission on Urban Poor has coordinated the programme; cities have contributed to the achievement of mid-decade goals; and more than 60,000 street children and urban working children have received educational assistance, health services, preventive education on HIV/AIDS, psycho-social services, legal protection and assistance for reunification with families. Beginning with 38 agencies working with street children and working children in 8 cities in 1988, the network now covers over 400 agencies in 23 cities in the country.

20. In support of the work of the East Asia and the Pacific Regional Project Committee on decentralization, local capacity-building and community empowerment, the UNICEF Manila team organized a seminar on the experience of the Philippines in decentralization as part of the mid-term review in August 1996. Selected Filipino participants, along with a few RMT members, shared their experiences and lessons learned. Based on this and other seminars in the region, the RMT project committee has identified some comparative advantages in the decentralized programming approach to child survival, development and protection as it helps to (a) maximize community participation; (b) maximize resource mobilization; (c) make services more relevant to community needs; (d) increase a sense of local ownership of services, facilities, their use and maintenance; (e) focus on better targeting for disparity reduction; (f) enable marginalized groups to overcome special problems; (g) improve intersectoral coordination; and (h) contribute to the achievement of local and national goals.

21. On the other hand, decentralized programming poses more challenges. It implies more complex programme management mechanisms for UNICEF and government partners as they work with multiple local partners while building local capacities; the official transfer of responsibility to local units is inadequate as the authority to make decisions and to allocate resources needs to be transferred as well; decentralization may not lead to community empowerment and requires major efforts to deal with the complex issues of poverty and community power structures; due to substantial UNICEF involvement, a level of dependency rather than self-help may be created; a constant dialogue and links must be maintained between local actions and national policies, plans and programmes for effective and sustainable programming; local capacity-building requires more than formal training, and learning by doing requires continuing efforts and time; and social mobilization needs to be planned to reach out to all key stakeholders and interest groups involved in dealing with issues of vulnerable groups of children and women.

22. The mid-term reviews in the three countries provided opportunities in 1996 for UNICEF to advocate for establishing direct links between the Convention on the Rights of the Child and country programmes. In terms of implementation of the Convention, the following ideas were promoted for adjustments in programmes of cooperation and also for governments' legislative reforms, national development policies, plans and programmes: (a) recognition of child rights as legitimate claims of all children; (b) reaching out to unreached children of ethnic minorities, as well as to those in urban slums, remote areas and other especially difficult circumstances, particularly girls, with basic services; (c) recognition and analysis of the situations of marginalized children in need of special protection measures and the provision of protective measures; (d) recognition of children's participation rights and opportunities for expression of their views; (e) the dissemination of knowledge of the Convention in civil society and the participation of NGOs, the private sector, communities and families in realizing children's rights; and (f) support to States Parties in their reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child as appropriate and necessary.

23. The mid-term reviews and RMT discussions have clearly identified the significance of the themes of decentralization and the Convention in the UNICEF-assisted country programmes that are aiming to achieve the year 2000 goals for children. It is recognized that a number of countries in the region have achieved most of the mid-decade goals with a strong commitment of national leaders and well-developed capacities of national Governments. Increasingly, however, it is being recognized that the year 2000 goals cannot be fully achieved and child rights cannot be fully realized by government programmes alone unless the private sector, NGOs, communities and families make some major adjustments in their plans and programmes, attitudes and practices that affect children's survival, development, protection and participation. It is this recognition of the need to mobilize all partners at national and subnational levels that offers new challenges and opportunities to UNICEF as country programmes in Thailand and the Philippines move towards the achievement of the year 2000 goals. The Convention on the Rights of the Child reminds UNICEF and its programme partners that as countries achieve and sustain child survival and development goals, child protection and participation issues are posing new challenges for the year 2000 and beyond.

24. Based on the three mid-term reviews, and combined with the work of the RMT project committee on decentralization and the Convention in 1996, some key future directions have emerged for the three country programmes in the region that are expected to move closer to district, community and family levels for reaching marginalized and unreached children as appropriate in each country context. Some examples of key directions are summarized below.

25. Integration of the regular programme with the emergency response in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has encouraged closer contacts with children in nurseries. As the World Food Programme increases its resources to provide CSB for distribution in nurseries for children under five years old, UNICEF will shift its focus in 1997-1998 from CSB to micronutrients and food security combined with the training of nursery managers, section doctors and parents in monitoring the health and nutritional status, ECD and education for children.

26. In Thailand, creative approaches to family, peer and community support mechanisms for the protection of marginalized children and women, sexually

exploited and working children, and women and children living with HIV/AIDS will be explored and strengthened. Based on studies of high-risk behaviour among youth and of life skills training, face-to-face communication techniques and peer networks will work to promote healthy behaviours and lifestyles. Community efforts will have to be linked more directly to the Tambon (subdistrict) Administration Organization to make maximum use of local resources. Some of the small-scale projects will have to establish links with national policies, programmes and resources allocated to programmes for children in especially difficult circumstances in the 8th National Development Plan for "going to scale" and for wider impact.

27. The Philippines programme that has directly supported the government policy and programme of decentralization will focus on capacity-building of LGUs and local communities through rural and urban basic services projects such as (a) community interventions and strengthening of referral facilities for obstetric emergencies, female functional literacy and activities for teachers, children, parents and midwives to promote safe motherhood; (b) establishing multigrade demonstration schools in selected provinces as "centres of best practices", with greater LGU participation and support; (c) child protection measures with the participation of communities, local leaders, police and barangay (small municipality) councils; and (d) greater support to family and community mechanisms for reducing malnutrition among children.

EVALUATIONS

28. In 1995-1996, country offices in the region have reported over 150 studies. They deal with (a) situation analyses and action research for needs assessment, for formulating programme and project strategies, for advocacy, and for determining the nature and scope of programme support, including geographic coverage; (b) annual and mid-term project reviews; and (c) end-of-project or programme evaluations conducted by Government-UNICEF-NGO partners and by external consultants. About 30 per cent of the studies can be classified as evaluations. They can be further classified by themes: (a) health and nutrition (salt iodization, breast-feeding practices, knowledge and skills of health workers, water/sanitation); (b) education (multigrade teaching, ECE); and (c) children in especially difficult circumstances (street children, child labour, children in armed conflicts, sexual exploitation of children and HIV/AIDS).

29. As indicative examples of major evaluations, the present report focuses on two studies conducted by external consultants with the participation of government and UNICEF staff, and supported by UNICEF as part of the country programmes in Cambodia and China.

30. The assessment of the UNICEF-assisted education programme in Cambodia, supported with supplementary funding from the Swedish International Development Authority, was conducted in 1995 in preparation for the new country programme to begin in 1996. The assessment was conducted by two external evaluators - a professor of education from the University of London, and the Dean of Educational Administration from Silpakorn University in Thailand - and two UNICEF regional advisers (in education and monitoring and evaluation) from Bangkok.

31. The study team conducted extensive discussions with government officials, NGO and donor representatives, school staff and community groups in the field, and UNICEF staff in Cambodia. An analysis of the educational system revealed the following as justification for the project: an enrolment rate at 70 per cent at best and much lower in poorer areas; a high repetition rate at 40 per cent, combined with a high drop-out rate, and leading to only one third of children from first grade reaching grade five; over 30 per cent of teachers with less than an eighth grade education; and children not acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills in schools. The purpose of the project was "to help children learn relevant content from trained teachers, aided by essential materials and facilities, in a well managed, healthy environment" in an attempt to "rehabilitate the educational system in crisis".

32. UNICEF education officers and experts from neighbouring countries in the region seconded to the Ministry of Education assisted the Ministry in (a) determining competencies at each primary grade level in language (Khmer) and mathematics; (b) developing curricula, assessment tools and textbooks; (c) printing millions of copies of textbooks and developing an efficient distribution system; (d) determining teacher competencies; (e) organizing teacher training; (e) establishing school clusters to link neighbourhood schools for administrative efficiency and experience exchange; and (f) training of ministry staff at national, provincial, district and school cluster levels through learning by doing.

33. Although the education project was characterized as being "complex, ambitious and `atypical' of UNICEF", the team strongly recommended continuing support in the new country programme beginning in 1996. It also recommended that the education programme be linked closely with other sectors and services to ensure a more holistic approach to children's needs. Community- and home-based ECE programmes were recommended to prepare children for school. The development of cluster schools was particularly applauded and has been adopted subsequently as a national policy. In view of financial support from major donors, the need for facilitating aid coordination by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports was highlighted.

34. A summary of a study of the provisions and financing of health care in poor rural areas in China was prepared by the China Network for Training and Research in Health Economics and Financing, in collaboration with the Harvard School of Public Health, in November 1995. The study, which provides an assessment of the national health care system and community health financing in China, was supported by UNICEF with its counterpart, the Department of Finance and Planning of the Ministry of Health, in cooperation with Shanghai Medical University and Harvard University, in 1994-1995.

35. Recognizing that China's cooperative medical system made a significant impact on health and health care for its rural population before its collapse during the privatization process, the China study was carried out to explore options for a new health policy. The study was conducted in 114 poor counties and included an in-depth review of health facilities in 30 poor counties and interviews with 50,115 people in 11,353 households on health status, maternal and child health (MCH) practices, available services, facilities, drugs, financial and physical barriers in health care. The study identified problems of family debt due to health expenses, declining living standards and a vicious cycle of illness and poverty. Reviews of existing schemes of community health financing indicated a strong preference for re-establishing a modernized

community financing system. The study team designed an affordable package of basic MCH care and recommended that communities should be encouraged to mobilize resources for health care while poorer households should be subsidized by the Government. The findings were discussed at a national seminar in October 1995 and are being considered for China's new national health policy.

CONCLUSIONS

36. The present report has shown that extensive efforts have been made jointly by UNICEF and government partners in organizing the review process; information on inputs and outputs is reviewed and original plans are adjusted on the basis of evolving situations, challenges and opportunities; and the analysis of the situation of children and women is updated in preparation for the reviews. The proportion of studies for assessing needs and formulating strategies is higher compared to project or programme evaluations, and external evaluators are invited to join UNICEF staff, particularly for evaluating large-scale projects. Although the value of some of the studies may be somewhat limited to projects at country level, it is reassuring to note that evaluative efforts do indeed play a part in enabling partners to adjust programme strategies. The challenge now is to further strengthen the planning, quality and follow-up of evaluations in country programmes and to extract important lessons that can have regional and global implications for improving the situations of children and women and for realizing child rights.

37. The RMT experiment in regional experience-sharing was introduced only in 1996 as part of the UNICEF MEP. It has shown some encouraging signs in improving the quality of analysis of programme issues and strategies through an ongoing professional dialogue among colleagues in the region. A number of countries in the region are well known for their success stories in economic, social and human development; and they offer important lessons to one another for possible applications and adaptations to country contexts. As the added value of the RMT experiment is recognized, it is hoped that country and regional office teams will benefit from the wealth of experience, knowledge and expertise within UNICEF and other institutional and human resources in the region for improving the quality of country programmes.

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SUMMARY OF MID-TERM REVIEWS AND MAJOR EVALUATIONS OF COUNTRY PROGRAMMES

South Asia

SUMMARY

The present report was prepared in response to Executive Board decision 1995/8 (E/ICEF/1995/9/Rev.1) which requested the secretariat to submit to the Board a summary of the outcome of mid-term reviews and major country programme evaluations, specifying, inter alia, the results achieved, lessons learned and the need for any adjustment in the country programme. The Board is to comment on the reports and provide guidance to the secretariat, if necessary. The mid-term reviews and major country programme evaluations described in the present report were conducted during 1996.

MID-TERM REVIEW

1. Maldives held the only mid-term review (MTR) conducted in South Asia in 1996. It is the smallest country in the region, with its population dispersed across more than 1,200 islands. Despite a growing national income related largely to the tourist industry, difficult conditions and significant inequalities persist in the situation of children and women. For example, UNICEF-supported studies have identified the need to strengthen referral and transportation services for high-risk pregnancies. Small-bore sewer systems must be expanded. Parental education is required on the adverse consequences of one of the world's highest divorce rates and the pressure put on girls to marry young rather than complete secondary education.

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2. The present focus of UNICEF support is to help the Government to maintain achievements and improve service quality, especially in the health and education sectors. The programme includes efforts to increase knowledge of the situation of children and women, as well as strong advocacy efforts. UNICEF works closely with the limited group of other United Nations agencies and bilateral donors operating in the country.

3. The Maldives' achievements over the past few years include a primary school enrolment rate of almost 100 per cent, with a 15 per cent drop-out rate, and over 90 per cent coverage of the expanded programme on immunization. Maldives is on the verge of being declared polio-free. There has been a drop by one half in the incidence of diarrhoeal disease in the past five years. Malnutrition among children under five years of age decreased by 15 per cent between 1981 and 1995.

4. Implementation and monitoring of the Convention on the Rights of the Child has been fostered through a communication network. The MTR discussed national reporting on the situation of children and on elements needed to implement the Convention. The MTR recommended a further shift of the programme from a needs-based to a rights-based approach, including an increased focus on universality of coverage. Future plans also include supporting a more participatory approach to health education and nutrition, which is expected to decrease levels of malnutrition.

5. The rates of budget expenditure for 1994 and 1995 were 97 and 98 per cent, respectively. Supplies represent just under 30 per cent of total financial assistance. Cash advances outstanding for over nine months during the same years were only 3 and 1.5 per cent, respectively, of the annual ceiling. Problems exist in mobilizing supplementary funds, with only $181,400 in supplementary funds received for the present programme period. However, government expenditures on education and health have reached their highest levels ever, now commanding one third of the national budget.

6. The programme has contributed to a significant expansion of capacity for education and other social services. Eight womens' centres have been established. The number of teachers has risen with the training of 853 primary teachers (425 of whom are women) at the Institute of Teachers' Education. An additional 442 teachers (of whom 316 are women) were trained in atoll-based training programmes. Early childhood development has become part of the primary education improvement plan, with 92 teachers trained to date. A range of educational materials for teachers and children has been developed at the Education Development Centre. The deployment of female health workers and traditional birth attendants to all islands has contributed to better control of communicable diseases, especially diarrhoea, malaria and measles, through advocacy and community awareness. This work is facilitated by a high degree of support by the population and capacity to participate in programmes and projects, including financially. There is an 80 per cent rate of private sector delivery of pharmaceutical needs. The UNICEF-supported revolving fund for the marketing and distribution of water tanks has been particularly successful, with 80 per cent of actual costs recovered in two years. Complete self-financing is expected within three years.

MAJOR EVALUATIONS

7. A cornerstone of the UNICEF strategy for improving the quality and usefulness of evaluations, globally and in the region, has been an effort to reduce the numbers of small-scale evaluative activities that have not been sufficiently substantive to make a difference to programme efficiency and effectiveness. As a result of this shift, the number of evaluations continued to decline in South Asia in 1996 as compared to previous years. Those that have taken place and those currently being planned are expected to be able to identify more strongly than in the past programme impact, coverage, efficiency and effectiveness. For example, in the context of the regional priority on reducing malnutrition among young children, a review of evaluations of nutrition programmes in the region has found virtually no evaluations over the past 10 years, sponsored by any development agency, that have conclusively demonstrated programme impact and linked impact with an analysis of programme efficiency. Taking stock of these lessons, UNICEF in Sri Lanka is paying particular attention to plans for evaluating its participatory nutrition improvement programme.

8. In the past, a main weakness of UNICEF evaluations has been a basic inability to describe programme impact and analyse cost issues. For this reason, the majority of UNICEF support for activities of an evaluative nature in the region during 1996 concentrated on monitoring systems. In Nepal and Pakistan, following completion of broad-range surveys designed to report on achievement of goals for children and women, the programmes have supported community-based surveillance processes that have examined programme impact, coverage and costs, both to households and to Government, of priority problems. For example, in both Nepal and Pakistan, there have been in-depth assessments of the low quality of primary education, with solutions proposed. Some of these results are reported below. Household and community-level assessments were followed by analysis at national, regional and community levels to discuss results and stimulate a stronger dialogue on finding solutions to the problem. In Nepal, this monitoring process is carried out under the authority of the National Planning Commission. Findings in the education sector have differed significantly from figures reported via standard school-based information systems, which has helped to spur discussion at the national level. In light of the regional trends towards decentralization of government responsibilities and increased support for community-based programmes, UNICEF will strengthen its support for building capacity for assessment and analysis of the situation of children and women at subnational levels, through both short-and longer-term training.

9. During 1996, key themes for evaluation in the region included the performance of universal salt iodization (USI), credit schemes and primary education programmes.

Universal salt iodization programme evaluations

10. Bhutan, India and Pakistan have carried out evaluations to improve USI efforts. The overall objectives of these exercises have been to: (a) assess the quantity and quality of iodized salt production against requirements; (b) review the system for monitoring iodized salt at production and consumption levels; and (c) analyse the resource needs and roles of different departments, institutions and agencies in achieving USI, and so make recommendations on future programme inputs. The three exercises are being conducted over a two-year period, and only initial results can be reported at the end of 1996.

11. In Bhutan, monitoring of salt iodization at community level, as well as of the iodine content of salt at the salt iodization plant, was found not to be proceeding as planned. As a result, iodine levels in some areas were sometimes found to be inadequate. The mid-decade goal for USI was reached none the less, although the level of salt adequately iodized at household level had decreased from 95 per cent in 1992 to 85 per cent in 1996. The total goitre rate was measured at 14 per cent, lower than in 1992, although the decline was less than the target of 50 per cent reduction. No iodine deficiency was found as measured by the standard median urinary iodine excretion. Future improvements in the programme require continued technical strengthening as well as stronger public commitment. Recommendations have been made in each of these areas, including steps to improve public understanding of the issue.

12. The Pakistan and India evaluations are more complex since the challenges for achieving USI are greater in those countries than in Bhutan. The first phase of these evaluations has consisted of discussions with the Government, salt producers and transporters, retailers and consumers. Subsequent phases include detailed surveys and costing exercises. A USI survey in Pakistan found salt iodization to be at acceptable levels in only about 20 per cent of households. The India household survey will be carried out in 1997 with a sample drawn from three salt-producing states and six net salt-consuming states to understand better the dynamics of production, distribution, sale and consumption. The India evaluation has been supported in part by the Government of Canada's Micronutrient Initiative. Results to date have shown that iodization plants are operating with installed iodization capacity of 8 million tons, and that iodized salt production increased from 2.8 million tons in 1992 to 3.7 million tons in 1995. Current production is estimated at 4 million tons, as against the estimated USI target of 5.6 million tons. Refined iodized salt now represents approximately 25 per cent of all salt available in poly-packs, the principal form purchased by consumers. Production of crystal salt, which is often subject to loss of iodate due to washing, has stopped. Recommended future actions include a general strengthening of the programme in southern states, setting up check points for salt transported by road at state entry points and streamlining movement by rail.

13. The most prominent realization in both countries so far has been of the need for more stringent legal measures and their enforcement. In India, the regulations on salt producers and transporters have been found to need strengthening. In Pakistan, discussions have focused on the development of a new national programme to control iodine deficiency disorders to give visibility and emphasize government ownership, legislation and monitoring of salt quality. The evaluation has also pointed to the need for a new strategy to inform the public of the consequences of iodine deficiency, and why the Government places a priority on iodized salt. The establishment of a steering committee has proved to be successful in India for government ownership of both process and results owing to efforts in capacity-building, self-assessment and use of findings. This approach is time-consuming, however, because of the involvement of many actors in different departments at different levels. Finally, the evaluations have revealed the need to improve laboratory practices and develop a computerized management information system.

Credit programme evaluations

14. Credit programmes for women are supported by UNICEF in a number of South Asian countries as a means of capacity-building and income enhancement. In the context of a major international focus on credit schemes in 1996, UNICEF carried

out two significant evaluations of this work. In Pakistan, the Baluchistan Credit Scheme is one of the provincial women's development initiatives which has been operating since 1989. The credit scheme was initiated in conjunction with the Social Welfare Department and aimed to promote self-help and solidarity by organizing working women in cooperatives. Credit was to be made available to poor women who would not qualify for commercial credit to help improve their production capacity and develop local networks. The evaluation found that after five years of operation, the programme had, in fact, increased the visibility and social acceptability of women's productive work as such, not only as part of their regular household duties. However, only 1,061 of the planned 2,000 recipients had obtained credit, and the loan fund had revolved in only 18 of the 36 centres. Several key reasons were identified, including co-optation of loans by influential people in the area, the lack or irregularity of payments because of investment failure, and a perception that the funds should be treated as grants rather than loans. The evaluation found that the women who benefited from the programme had skills, but needed a resource base to break the poverty cycle. Those who took loans without adequate preparation tended not to be successful.

15. The scheme was found to have high costs relative to loan turnover, with service delivery expenditures of some 2,400 rupees in relation to the average loan amount of 7,500 rupees, calling for either increased loans, reduced expenses or a realistic interest rate/service charge. The Social Welfare Department was chosen as a partner because it already had outreach activities to communities. However, the Department, and many recipients, considered its role to be more as a deliverer of services, and it had little background for commercial ventures. Other partners were not fully effective in forming functioning cooperative groups. Baseline data were not available to determine the overall impact of the programme. The evaluation made a number of recommendations to improve sustainability, particularly to strengthen the organizational base of the programme, and to move to a more market-based lending approach with the local cooperatives.

16. The project for production credit for rural women in Nepal has operated for over 10 years, with support from the Government and a number of donor agencies. An evaluation was carried out to guide future UNICEF support to the project and related women's development activities. The project had begun with considerable success, but as it expanded it lost effectiveness, in part because of bureaucratic structures and procedures. Repayment rates for loans have been high (over 90 per cent according to a 1991 study by the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank) and more women than before have had access to credit under the project. Sustainability of the income-gaining activities was found to be limited, however, as the majority of loan recipients either depended on new lending to continue or were trapped in debt because of failure of high-risk loan investments. (Repayment rates and the number of loan cycles entered into are thus, on their own, misleading measures of the success of credit programmes.) Factors found to influence the long-term capacity for loan repayment were the size of landholdings, the degree of cooperation of the husband and the frequency of interaction and supervision of the project field staff, notably the women district officers.

17. The project appears to have influenced the formation of local groups as intended, although the household survey used to evaluate group formation has yet to be analysed. Before the newly formed project groups can obtain credit, they

must work together in other activities to develop mutual trust and to prevent the formation of groups that focus solely on credit. The women district officers are to give basic training to strengthen group dynamics and empowerment, and in future they must function more as advocates, rather than as implementors. Insecure career prospects, lack of autonomy in solving local problems and a limited sense of project ownership have led to declining motivation among the project's field cadre. These problems are rooted at the larger level of bureaucracy since, in part because of the project's gender identification, it has been implemented in isolation from government technical and extension agencies and support for national sectoral policies. Major recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the project are for better communication between line departments of local government; between the project federation and the Government; between the community-level institutions and project groups; and between women development sections at the district level and UNICEF field offices.

Primary education programme evaluations

18. Recent education evaluations in several countries, including Bangladesh and Nepal, have indicated the limited effectiveness of primary education programmes. In Bangladesh, an assessment of a new primary school curriculum showed that the newly developed curriculum had an insignificant impact on childrens' school performance. Studying 6,000 children from 10 districts, the assessment found that the average score obtained by class-four children for all subjects combined, using the new materials, was 49 per cent, only 2 per cent better than the average score of class-five children who were educated with the old materials. At the same time, 95 per cent of the teachers and 75 per cent of the parents considered the new curriculum an improvement. In explaining these results, the evaluation reported that teachers were not prepared to use the new materials appropriately and that the new educational materials were in short supply. Childrens' performance differed significantly between government and registered non-government schools, indicating inadequate facilities and low quality of teaching in the latter group. A significant gender gap in performance was revealed - 4 per cent overall and 7 per cent in math. Other findings pointed to the effects of the socio-economic environment on children's performance. A relatively consistent pattern in performance by district was also found, indicating the importance of area-specific factors. The results are being translated into actions to improve the curriculum and its use, teachers' performance and mean achievement of basic competencies, as defined by the Government of Bangladesh, for an 11-year-old child. Even more important than changing the curriculum is improving ways of teaching and learning. To this effect, multiple ways of teaching and learning are being introduced in primary schools.

19. Similarly in Nepal, significant differences were found in many indicators of educational performance (primary school enrolment, girls' education and literacy rates, as well as nutrition) across the country's economic zones and within districts. A round of the Nepal multiple indicator survey (NMIS) was carried out as part of a broad assessment of the national basic and primary education programme (BPEP). BPEP, supported by the World Bank, UNICEF and other donors, was designed to address a range of key educational problems: low school enrolment rates, especially for girls; high drop-out and repetition rates; poor performance by students; low quality of instruction, instructional materials and school management; and underutilization of community resources. NMIS results

showed, at most, generally modest impacts of BPEP in these different respects. Drop-out rates were found to be essentially the same (2 per cent for boys and 4 per cent for girls) in BPEP and non-BPEP areas, and school enrolment was only slightly higher in BPEP areas. However, repetition rates were found to be lower at BPEP sites (19 versus 24 per cent for boys and 20 versus 27 per cent for girls). Attendance by both boys and girls was about 10-15 per cent higher in BPEP areas. The gender gap in rates of enrolment, retention and completion is undiminished at some 20 per cent, requiring strengthened communication and mobilization activities. The overall difference made by BPEP is difficult to judge, however, owing to a lack of data prior to the BPEP intervention.

20. It was found that for classes one and two, neither the physical facilities nor the level of teacher training had a major impact on enrolment, retention or drop-out rates. Perhaps the single most important factor in improving educational performance was the presence of female teachers. Significant recommendations of the evaluation are thus for expansion and quality improvement of teachers' in-service training and increased recruitment of female teachers. Because drop-out and repetition rates are highest for the first two grades, the expansion of pre-primary education is also expected to improve educational performance. A companion cost-effectiveness study showed that the nationwide implementation of pre-primary classes would generate greater savings, in terms of reduced wastage in class one, than the actual costs of pre-primary school.

21. The evaluations in each of the above areas indicate an emphasis on operational relevance and the generation of lessons to improve programme effectiveness and efficiency. The USI reviews illustrate a formative evaluation approach in a multi-country programme with strong international support. The credit scheme evaluations were carried out to strengthen the slow process of capacity-building and empowerment of women at community level. The education evaluations were designed to assist national authorities and UNICEF to focus efforts and resources on large-scale, national programmes. In each of these areas, a key need is to strengthen capacities for monitoring to obtain regular, basic data, particularly at disaggregated levels. Evaluations in the region are becoming more substantive, addressing priority programmes and issues of "process" - community empowerment, gender aspects and service quality - as well as outcome. It is expected that these trends will continue, with further attention to such region-wide initiatives as USI and national immunization days.

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SUMMARY OF MID-TERM REVIEWS AND MAJOR EVALUATIONS OF COUNTRY PROGRAMMES

Middle East and North Africa

SUMMARY

The present report was prepared in response to Executive Board decision 1995/8 (E/ICEF/1995/9/Rev.1) which requested the secretariat to submit to the Board a summary of the outcome of mid-term reviews and major country programme evaluations, specifying, inter alia, the results achieved, lessons learned and the need for any adjustment in the country programme. The Board is to comment on the reports and provide guidance to the secretariat, if necessary. The mid-term reviews and major country programme evaluations described in the present report were conducted during 1996.

MID-TERM REVIEW

1. The mid-term review (MTR) process began in Djibouti in July 1996 with sectoral discussions coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. Government authorities and UNICEF reviewed the cooperation in each project at meetings of intersectoral experts and at ministerial-level meetings. Development partners, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO), donor representatives, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the UNICEF regional office staff, participated in both meetings. Contributing to the MTR discussions were a survey of welfare indicators undertaken jointly by the Direction Nationale de Statistique (DINAS) (National

* E/ICEF/1997/8.

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Office of Statistics), the World Bank, UNDP and UNICEF in 1996; a retrospective study of infant and maternal mortality and morbidity conducted by the Ministry of Public Health and UNICEF in 1995; and a comprehensive evaluation of maternal and child health (MCH) services undertaken by the Ministry of Public Health and UNICEF in 1996.

2. There have been substantial changes in the political and social climate affecting children in Djibouti since 1994, when the current programme of cooperation began. A three-year armed conflict ended in December 1994, paving the way for reconstruction and political reform. This process, however, faces many challenges, particularly in maintaining and improving the quality and availability of basic services. Some 50,000 families are internally displaced and the infrastructure is severely damaged. Some 150,000 refugees and economic migrants from Ethiopia and Somalia live in refugee camps or in squatter settlements of Djibouti City, comprising almost one third of the country's population and putting an additional burden on the fragile structure of social services.

3. A weak domestic revenue base and a rapidly growing population constrain social service expenditures. The Government has initiated steps for structural adjustment, reducing allowances to civil servants by 60 per cent and enacting spending cuts. A severe drought in late 1995 and early 1996 led to the loss of one third of the livestock in three of the five districts of Djibouti. Two thirds of the population live below the poverty line, and the unemployment rate is 52 per cent among men and 66 per cent among women.

4. In 1996, a DINAS survey put the country's infant and under-five mortality rates at 104 and 140 per 1,000 live births, respectively, down from 114 and 156 in 1989 (according to the Ministry of Public Health, UNICEF and WHO). Malnutrition has increased; in 1996, 14 per cent of infants were acutely malnourished (wasted) and 24.4 per cent chronically malnourished (stunted) (according to DINAS), compared to 11 and 22 per cent, respectively, in 1990 (Ministry of Public Health/UNICEF/WHO). A 1996 comprehensive evaluation of MCH services in Djibouti, conducted by the Ministry of Public Health and Social Affairs with support from UNICEF, indicated that the quality of services has declined since 1994.

5. The primary education system continues to face major challenges of access and quality. The gross enrolment rate was 42 per cent in 1994. The enrolment rate in 1995 was 10 per cent lower for girls. This does not include the 40 per cent of school-age children who attend private schools that are not recognized by the Ministry of Education. A study by CARITAS (International Conference of Catholic Churches) showed that in 1995, there was an increase of 12 per cent in the number of children attending such non-formal education facilities. Progress has been made in introducing culturally relevant materials into the primary-level curriculum.

6. Political and administrative decentralization, a key element of the political reform process, has begun to promote greater community participation in the provision of basic services, and thus a greater responsiveness of these services to local needs. Local community health committees, now active in many wards, are one example. Political reform and democratization have broadened the scope for media discussion of social concerns and human rights issues, including female genital mutilation. The radio and television network has increased its

programming in the country's three official languages (Afar, Somali and Arabic), and has increased coverage of social issues.

Achievements

7. UNICEF, WHO and other partners including the Government of France played major roles in mobilizing national immunization days, with a special emphasis on war-affected areas and Djibouti City. A strategy of forging new partnerships and promoting decentralization contributed to these achievements. Vitamin A supplementation coverage reached 68 per cent among children under one year of age; 80 per cent of the country's maternity wards met the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative criteria; awareness of oral rehydration therapy among mothers reached 85 per cent; and legislation was approved for salt iodization and a ban on the import and distribution of breast-milk substitutes. Higher levels of child immunization were regained so that in 1996, coverage of oral polio vaccine reached 84 per cent and measles coverage 68 per cent. It was also necessary to continue to provide direct material support, including vaccines. Supplementary funds enabled a major expansion of efforts to combat malnutrition in 1996 through the establishment of six nutrition centres to provide therapeutic and supplementary feeding, nutritional surveillance and health and nutrition education. Supplementary funding also allowed for a greater focus on a number of emerging health priorities, including water and sanitation activities in peri-urban slums and refugee camps; emergency rehabilitation of war-damaged health facilities; and the provision of essential drugs. UNICEF undertook awareness-raising on AIDS, while other elements of the national AIDS programme, including AIDS planning, screening and case management, were supported jointly within the framework of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and with other bilateral and NGO partners.

8. The urban community health project, a cross-sectoral project involving health, water and sanitation, and social mobilization interventions, implemented with UNICEF support and in conjunction with bilateral and NGO partners, made some achievements. Local committees were established, and community health workers (CHWs) and birth attendants were recruited and trained. A health dispensary was constructed. A school begun under the urban community health project has been adopted by the Ministry of Education as a model for replication. The project has encountered constraints in promoting active community participation and project sustainability because the decision-making power on the community health committee tends to rest with local officials and there is no room for women to voice their concerns. It has proven difficult to maintain the motivation of CHWs. Local resource mobilization and cost-recovery proved challenging.

9. Direct material support included the provision of books and other educational supplies to children in refugee camps, peri-urban areas and conflict-affected areas. UNICEF provided funds to build capacity by strengthening educational management information and to increase the relevance of learning materials, with a special emphasis on the rights of the child and basic life skills. UNICEF supported the development of a weekly children's radio programme in Afar, Somali, Arabic and French on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and girls' education. Focus groups suggest that the programmes are widely listened to and popular among children. Studies were done on enrolment, educational attainment and street children.

10. Taking advantage of the renewed national interest in gender issues generated by the Fourth World Conference on Women, UNICEF cooperation shifted towards advocacy, capacity-building and empowerment to address gender and development concerns. There is now wider discussion of gender disparities and women's status and of such issues as female genital mutilation. UNICEF provided funds and technical assistance to the Union nationale des femmes Djiboutiennes (National Union of Djiboutian Women) to build their capacity and for training in life skills and income generation. Direct salary support was discontinued.

11. Political reform has meant that UNICEF can now make cooperative agreements with the heads of districts and wards, and that there are new opportunities to mobilize and advocate at district and community levels for the goals of the national programme of action and for implementation of the Convention. Advocacy and social mobilization have included such key events as the Day of the Djiboutian Child; cooperation with the media, including radio, television and newspapers; policy-oriented research on the status of child rights in Djibouti; and advocacy with various levels of decision makers. Facts for Life messages were integrated into the primary cycle curriculum.

12. An intersectoral committee was established to monitor implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to prepare the country's report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. In addition, the comprehensive revision of the country's legal legislation by the Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs will take the Convention into account, including revisions of laws on juvenile delinquency and on the definition and prosecution of minors.

Lessons learned

13. MTR participants agreed that increased coordination is needed among development partners, including UNDP, WFP and WHO, to avoid programme overlapping and redundancies, as well as with the sectoral ministries. The MTR agreed that due to the damage to the country's infrastructure, there was a continuing need for material support in health and education and to the urban project. Priority should be placed on building the capacity of the Ministry of Public Health to improve the quality of services and to sustain gains in child health, including immunization. This will include the training of all levels of health personnel in primary health care and for child growth monitoring and promotion. Support should continue for the decentralization of health care management and for community participation in planning the delivery of health services. Information, education and communication activities will be more systematically integrated into the MCH programme. For example, in the urban project, experience shows that CHWs need steady, intensive supervision and follow-up. The continuation and expansion of the project will make provision for this need.

14. A more explicit approach to reach children in need of special protection into programmes should be incorporated into the health and peri-urban slum programmes. The MTR agreed that during the remainder of the programme cycle, support should continue for AIDS awareness at both the national level and among high-risk groups.

15. Formal education alone will not contribute to higher enrolment and retention for girls. The Government and UNICEF are placing a new emphasis on alternative non-formal and informal education for girls. Priority should be

given to the creation of low-cost community schools in underserved areas, in cooperation with NGOs and the private sector. The programme should continue to improve the quality and relevance of formal learning by incorporating messages on basic life skills and knowledge in the primary cycle curriculum, and through teacher training. There should also be a new emphasis on improving parental and community care of preschool children through an integrated approach using television, radio and face-to-face communication.

16. Finally, the new directions in gender and development had already proven successful, and the MTR agreed that these new emphases should continue and that the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women should be used as a vehicle for further promotion of women's status. Support could be given to a women's affairs unit now under consideration by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

EVALUATIONS

17. Two major evaluations were undertaken in the region in 1996. One evaluation dealt with the Child-Friendly Village Initiative (CFVI) in the Sudan, a project which aims to build community, and especially women's, involvement in development and to improve both children's and villages' well-being. The second was an evaluation of an education project in Morocco, which examined the enrolment and retention of girls in school, a central programme priority for the region.

Child-Friendly Village Initiative in the Sudan

18. The CFVI project in the Sudan has taken a comprehensive approach to village-level development. The objectives of the Initiative are to strengthen primary health services; provide basic and adult education for women; improve water and sanitation facilities; increase awareness of healthy lifestyles; eradicate harmful traditional practices; and enrich the cultural life of villagers. The project uses three main strategies: service delivery, through the provision of water, essential drugs and educational materials; capacity-building, through the training of teachers and health personnel; and empowerment, through income generation and the use of community-level committees to decide on the use of funds generated through cost-recovery. The project began in 1993 in 20 villages and was expanded to 200 villages in 1996. Communities near selected villages and state governments are requesting its expansion. It was agreed to evaluate the project before doing so.

19. The evaluation was undertaken by UNICEF Sudan in close cooperation with the regional office. Three external national consultants were engaged. The evaluation used both quantitative and qualitative instruments. A household survey covered 700 households in 23 villages (12 project villages and 11 control villages), drawn from both North and South Kordofan, where the project has been operating for at least two years. The team of principle investigators also used social animation, semi-structured interviews, rapid rural appraisal and participatory rural appraisal techniques. Interviews were held with village-level CFVI committees, key informants, medical assistants, midwives, teachers and kindergartens. Children were interviewed, using their drawings to spark discussion. Site visits were made to clinics, water pumps and schools.

20. The state government was actively involved in the overall planning and implementation of the evaluation. Development partners, including the International Fund for Agricultural Development and NGOs, participated. During the course of the evaluation, representatives of the Government of Canada, the main donor to CFVI, visited a sampling of villages. Results were presented and discussed with all government, United Nations and donor partners.

21. The evaluation found that the programme enjoys a high level of commitment from state government and from the community. During the period 1993-1996, state government provided 40 per cent of the cost of the project, in addition to in-kind contributions including staff salaries and rent. The only resources expected from UNICEF were transportation and the provision of some capital investment for water supply and for revolving cash funds. There is successful social mobilization through the village development committees that were established in all CFVI villages. Some 77 per cent of these committees meet regularly with the village to discuss progress and to exchange views. Each of these committees has, on average, one third female members and in some villages one half of the members are women. In North Kordofan State, significantly more women have received training in health and nutrition and in skills for income generation. Health services in project villages are better used, and many children are brought from neighbouring villages to health units in project villages where there is a cost-recovery programme. Project villages have significantly more adult education programmes, and they are of higher quality and take place more regularly.

22. The evaluation found an uneven health impact in project villages. There was significantly less vitamin A deficiency in project villages (21 cases compared to 84). In North Kordofan, there was significantly greater use of oral rehydration salts. Immunization rates were not significantly higher in project villages. Record-keeping at the village level, in both project and control villages, was very poor. In nearly one third of the villages surveyed, there was no proper registration; proper maternal records were kept in one third of the villages. There were problems in the replenishment of drugs and educational supplies from the revolving fund.

23. When the project began in 1993, greater Kordofan was one state. With the division of Kordofan into three states, it was difficult to maintain an even momentum. This could account for differences found in the project villages in different states.

24. Health interventions in the project villages are set up separately and vertically. Closer integration of individual interventions, accepted as a package by the family, might result in a clearer and more significant impact. A child-centred monitoring system could focus on the health and growth of each individual child, rather than on numbers of interventions at the village level. Registration and better record-keeping will contribute to a greater health impact. Government, UNICEF and development partners are examining the results and adjustments are being made in project implementation. A further evaluation will be conducted in conjunction with the MTR of the Sudan country programme to measure the impact and to decide on a future course of action.

Girls' education in Morocco

25. The girls' education programme in Morocco, which is supported by UNICEF and the Canadian International Development Agency, has three main objectives. The first goal, established in 1992, was to raise the primary school enrolment rates for girls to 50 per cent by 1994 and to 80 per cent by 1996. The other goals were to reduce girls' drop-out rates by 80 per cent and to increase literacy rates for girls and women. The project works at two levels. One is direct interventions in 3-5 schools in each of 17 of the 65 provinces of Morocco, through the provision of books, papers and other school materials; teacher training; the installation of water and sanitation facilities; and the organization of extracurricular activities. The other involves social mobilization and advocacy activities which reach the entire population of each province. In 1994, the number of provinces covered by the project increased from 5 to 17. In 1996, UNICEF conducted an evaluation of the project in close cooperation with the Ministry of National Education so that any necessary adjustments could be made during the new programme of cooperation for 1997-2001. The primary objectives of this evaluation were to define the main constraints to the education of girls in rural areas; measure the accomplishments of strategies used; identify points of excellence and success for replication; suggest methods to improve sustainability; and recommend adjustments for the continuation and expansion of the project.

26. The evaluation covered a sample of 10 of the 17 provinces in which the girls' education project has operated, including both provinces in which the project has been active since 1992, and those in which it began in 1995. Five groups were interviewed: parents; students; school principals; local authorities; and project managers. Both quantitative (surveys) and qualitative (focus groups) instruments were used. The Département central du Ministère de l'Education Nationale (enseignement primaire) (Ministry of National Education (Primary School Division)) was involved throughout the evaluation, including in its design and field work and the analysis of the results. Development partners, including the European Union, UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and French cooperation, have been involved at key stages.

27. Girls' enrolment rates were significantly higher in the project areas. In the five provinces in which the project began in 1992, the enrolment rate for girls had risen from 32 per cent in 1992 to 65 per cent in 1995. The evaluation was unable to determine if the project had contributed to an increase in the retention rate as it has not yet undertaken the additional statistical analyses required. Likewise, the evaluation did not measure changes in literacy rates in the project areas.

28. The evaluation found four main categories of constraints to the education of girls: the absence of a secondary school (collège), as parents were not willing to send their girls to school unless it resulted in a diploma; the cost of education, as parents would be more willing to pay for their boys to attend school; lack of infrastructure at the schools, including latrines and facilities for washing; and the distance between school and home. Additional constraints included a lack of a school canteen, a lack of schoolbooks, the practice of combining two to three classes in one room, and the lack of a tradition of sending girls to school. The evaluation identified a series of priority actions to strengthen the project, by lifting these constraints. Interviewees also

suggested that parents should be involved in the management of the school and that school curricula should be brought up to date and made more relevant.

29. Social mobilization activities had reached 94 per cent of the teachers and 62 per cent of the parents in project schools. The use of radio spots and other media campaigns had contributed to the overall rise in enrolment in the provinces with project schools.

30. The project had successfully encouraged greater involvement of parents in their children's schooling. In the project schools, 66 per cent of parents had been in contact with the school principal. Satisfaction with the project was also high: 70 per cent of the principals were satisfied with the supply of books and other materials. Of those who were not satisfied, most felt that more supplies should have been provided. The same proportion were satisfied with the extracurricular activities for students, including the teaching of skills such as sewing and school gardens.

31. The evaluation recommended that success stories could be popularized and that there should be more comprehensive teacher training, as well as improved school facilities and learning environments. Other recommendations deal with the management of the project itself, including strengthening of the project through more decentralized management, better communication among all partners at all levels of the project and the establishment of a better monitoring system.

32. Constraints faced by the evaluation included the large distances to be traversed, which required considerable logistical effort and time. It was evident that female investigators are essential for field work in rural areas. The evaluation was designed to examine the project for girls' education as a whole, which did not permit precise examination of the added value of the UNICEF component.

33. The evaluation has been discussed extensively with the Government. The Ministry of Education has expressed its intention to open a national debate with donors and development partners on the results of this evaluation and to build on these successful strategies. The UNICEF country office is using the results to help define priorities of the education component of the current programme of cooperation. Other partners, including French and Japanese cooperation, the European Union, USAID, UNDP and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, are using the lessons learned in projects for girls' education which they are funding.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MANAGEMENT EXCELLENCE PROGRAMME

34. Both the Djibouti MTR and the evaluations in the region profited from progress in management excellence in the region. Participation in the Djibouti MTR was discussed by the Regional Management Team (RMT), and there was sharing of human resources regionally for the evaluations in Morocco and the Sudan. The RMT also defined a process through which team members could provide technical advice to each other in country programme preparation, both during the process of preparing a strategy and programme, as well as at the time of approval of country programme recommendations (CPRs). A team was established to review the Jordan country note, which was presented to the Executive Board at its first

regular session of 1997. Teams have also been established to participate in the preparation of the other CPRs to be presented to the Board at its third regular session of 1997.

35. The RMT developed guidelines for sharing both human and financial resources between country offices. Such sharing of staff, to meet specific needs as well as for training, has already taken place between the Djibouti, Tunisia and Yemen country offices, for example, and between the Egypt country office and the regional office. This practice, as well as the involvement of country office staff in programme planning and review meetings, calls for a significant cultural change within UNICEF. The new ethos calls upon RMT members to assume a new responsibility for regional priorities and allows planning to benefit from a broader regional perspective.